

Title: Trauma Narratives – Recommendations for Investigative Interviewing

Running head: INTERVIEWING TRAUMATIZED VICTIMS

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Statement

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Author A [Patrick Risan] has declared no conflicts of interest

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Abstract

In the investigation of a criminal event, the police may encounter witnesses or victims experiencing symptoms of being traumatized (e.g. anxiety, intrusive thoughts, or avoidance of trauma-related stimuli). This may pose a challenge in investigative interviews where police interviewers aim to obtain reliable and detailed accounts. Based on previous theory and research, this theoretical paper aims to outline recommendations for police interviewers for approaching traumatized adult witnesses to facilitate communication, attend to the well-being of the individual, and reach investigative aims. First, factors considered important for preparing for the interview and building rapport will be presented. Then, different aspects of how to facilitate the interviewee's account will be described with an emphasis on how police interviewers can approach emotional reactions to maintain rapport.

Keywords: Trauma; traumatized interviewee; police interview; investigative interview; rapport

In the investigation of a criminal incident, the police want to find out as much as possible about what happened. One of the main methods used to gather information is to interview witnesses, victims, and suspects with the aim of eliciting and documenting an accurate and complete account of the event (Milne & Powell, 2010). In investigative interviews, police interviewers rely on the interviewee's memory and their ability to communicate details of what happened (Dando, Geiselman, Macleod, & Griffiths, 2016). However, police officers often encounter individuals in different states that create barriers to the development of rapport — a relational context that facilitates communication and the provision of an account. One such context is the investigative interviewing of individuals who have been subject to traumatic and emotionally-charged events. How should police interviewers approach traumatized victims? How can interviewers accommodate the state of the interviewee to build rapport and achieve investigative aims? This is the scope of the current paper aiming to present current knowledge on how the effects of traumatic events impact victims and, based on an understanding of the processes they may experience, provide recommendations for investigative interviewing.

Because of the nature of their work, police investigators may encounter individuals who have lived through horrific events and, consequently, experience serious negative psychological effects in the aftermath of victimization (Ellison & Munro, 2016). These may include, for example, victims of a traffic accident (Holeva, Tarrier, & Wells, 2001), sexual assault (Hardy, Young, & Holmes, 2009; Westera, Kebbell, & Milne, 2016), violent crime (Brewin, Andrews, Rose, & Kirk, 1999; Norris et al., 2002), or a terrorist attack (Moscardino, Scrimin, Capello, & Altoe, 2010; Neria, DiGrande, & Adams, 2011). People who have lived through a traumatic event may experience that memories and emotions have not been integrated, coped with, or 'fully processed', resulting in experiences of psychological disequilibrium, pain and suffering (Green, Choi, & Kane, 2010; Ogden, 2010). Being in such

a state can be related to the individual experiencing a psychological vulnerability which potentially makes it harder to cope with the situation by impairing their ability to understand questions and the implications of their answers. Additionally, vulnerabilities can increase the risks to the reliability of the evidence of witnesses. For instance, by being prone, in certain circumstances, to provide information which is inaccurate or misleading (Gudjonsson, 2006; Smith & O'Mahony, 2018). Thus, when interviewing traumatized interviewees, it is important that the police interviewer is conscious of how trauma may influence the state of the interviewee (e.g. thoughts, feelings, reactions) to be able to obtain constructive rapport.

A parallel aim to enhancing communication is to be considerate and mindful of the interviewee's state and taking a therapeutic jurisprudential approach, which entails being aware of how legal processes and the actions of legal actors have *consequences* for the emotional life and well-being of those involved (Petrucchi, Winick, & Wexler, 2003). It should be highlighted that victims' recovery from trauma is a process and that individuals can emerge from crisis or stressful situations with new perspectives or coping strategies that result in improved well-being (Green et al., 2010; Halligan, Michael, Clark, & Ehlers, 2003; Kindt & Engelhard, 2005; Meyerson, Grant, Carter, & Kilmer, 2011). In this respect, it is important to be aware of how the interview has the potential of both exacerbating the state of the interviewee (e.g. through re-traumatization), and, promoting empowerment and well-being. (e.g. by coming to terms with their experiences, or, establishing a sense of control) (Ellison & Munro, 2016; Herman, 2003).

Madsen and Holmberg (2015) experimentally studied the influence of different interviewer styles on interviewees' well-being and therapeutic jurisprudence. The analysis showed that a humanitarian interviewing approach (where the interviewer was perceived as helpful, obliging, cooperative, friendly, and empathetic) was associated with interviewees' providing more information and experiencing higher levels of personal well-being compared

with a dominant approach. In many respects, these findings are comparable to those of Langballe and Schultz (2017), who investigated the factors leading to positive experiences or increased stress in the investigative interviews of 320 victims following the Utøya terrorist attack in Norway in 2011. The participants who reported the investigative interview to be a positive situation said that they:

- could control their own narrative
- were able to present a coherent account
- were listened to by an interviewer promoting safety
- perceived the police as empathetic and professional
- were able to cope with emotional reactions during the interview, and
- regarded the interview as meaningful.

The question, though, is how do we get there? How can a police interviewer approach a traumatized interviewee to achieve investigative aims, reduce potential distress and create a positive interview experience? Based on existing theory and research in forensic and clinical psychology, we aim to outline recommendations regarding how police interviewers should approach adult, cooperative, traumatized victims to attend to the well-being of the individual and reach investigative aims. Throughout the paper the interpersonal aspects of investigative interviewing will be emphasized to a greater extent than, for instance, contextual aids (e.g. the use of an intermediary, special measures etc) (Ministry of Justice, 2011; O'Mahony, Marchant, & Fadden, 2016). First, the potential impact of trauma upon the state of the victim and his/her ability to remember what happened will be described. Then, recommendations for interviewing traumatized victims in the context of police interviewing will be provided with

an emphasis on: building rapport, facilitating the interviewee's account, managing emotional states to maintain rapport, and closing the interview.

The impact of trauma

A trauma-informed response emphasizes the importance of understanding how traumatic experiences impact the individuals involved (Ellison & Munro, 2016; Healy, 2019). This requires that the police interviewer have certain knowledge about the dynamics of trauma to be able to respond in a constructive manner. It is particularly important to be aware of how reactions to traumatic events are complex, can be extremely distressing, and can have a major impact on the life of the individual. Symptoms may be transient and vary greatly between individuals, requiring the police interviewer to be open and adaptive to be able to accommodate the different states he/she may encounter.

The development of symptoms following traumatic experiences are influenced by contextual and individual factors, such as severity of trauma, peritraumatic psychological processes (processes occurring during the incident), frequency, distance in time, social support, and how the individual appraises and copes with the traumatic event (Brewin, Andrews, & Valentine, 2000; Halligan et al., 2003; Kindt & Engelhard, 2005; Meyerson et al., 2011; Moscardino et al., 2010; O'Kearney & Perrott, 2006; Ozer, Best, Lipsey, & Weiss, 2008; Ozer & Weiss, 2004). To further understand the impact of trauma it is important to consider the nature or type of trauma the interviewee has experienced. For instance, is the person a victim of a single, overwhelming incident or a series of traumatic events?

People who have lived through a single, overwhelming traumatic event (e.g. violent assault, traffic accident) may initially experience symptoms of acute stress, such as fear,

horror, helplessness, and dissociative symptoms (e.g., detachment or emotional numbness), which, over time, place the individual at risk for developing posttraumatic symptoms (post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD) (Brewin et al., 1999; Brewin et al., 2000; Halligan et al., 2003; Kindt & Engelhard, 2005; Ozer et al., 2008). PTSD involves a person being exposed to actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violation and, consequently, develop symptoms such as intrusive experiences (e.g., reliving the experience, nightmares), heightened arousal and reactivity (e.g., hypervigilance, irritable behavior), behavioral avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, and negative alternations in cognition and mood (e.g., inability to recall key features of the traumatic event, persistent negative trauma-related emotions such as anger, fear, horror, guilt, or shame) (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Ellison & Munro, 2016). The transition from acute stress to PTSD is dynamic, indicating that the severity and experiences of symptoms will vary across different time frames. For instance, symptoms of acute stress experienced in the hours and days following a traumatizing incident, may gradually be replaced or supplemented by symptoms of PTSD in the months, and sometimes years, after the event. Additionally, individuals experiencing symptoms of PTSD may also be at risk for developing comorbid conditions, such as other anxiety disorders, affective disorders, and substance abuse disorders (Brady, Killeen, Brewerton, & Lucerini, 2000).

Many of the core symptoms of PTSD mentioned above may also be experienced by individuals who have lived through a long-term exposure of painful or traumatic events due to other's intention to do harm. Having experienced a series of distressing incidents (e.g. neglect, sexual abuse, physical abuse, witnessing domestic violence), particularly at a young age, place the individual at risk for developing symptoms of complex trauma. This involves impairments in core capacities to regulate emotions and behavior, dissociation, disturbance in

attention and executive functioning, and difficulties related to self-concept, attachment and interpersonal relatedness (Cook et al., 2005).

In the context of an investigation, it is important to be aware of how trauma may have influenced the interviewee and how he/she relates to attending a police interview. For instance, victims can be reluctant to report the crime in the first place (Westera et al., 2016), or, the police's requirement for detailed information after the incident may conflict with the support traumatized individuals may require (Herman, 2003; Jakobsen, Langballe, & Schultz, 2017). In the interview, the individual may be dominated by internal processes which makes it difficult to be receptive (Siegel, 2010). For instance, if flashbacks or intrusive memories make the interviewee dissociate by 'zoning out' or going into a state of emotional numbness, it may be difficult for the person to be present in the here and now (O'Mahony, Milne, & Smith, 2018; Smith & Milne, 2018). Furthermore, the interviewee could experience a desire to avoid talking about certain issues, confusion, difficulties concentrating, hostility, agitation, "survivor guilt" or sudden rise in overwhelming feelings of anxiety or sadness, which create barriers for providing a detailed and coherent account.

An obvious potential challenge of interviewing traumatized individuals is to facilitate the interviewees' ability to remember what happened. The accuracy of memory of trauma can be said to be controversial (McNally, 2005), and many unanswered questions remain, such as; whether trauma memory should be regarded as fixed or static (Dekel & Bonanno, 2013), or, the extent to which the interviewee can recall central or peripheral details from the incident (Christianson, 1992; Ginet & Verkampt, 2007). Research indicates that there is a difference in traumatic recall depending on how the state of the individual proceeds after the event, whether the individual develops PTSD or not. The emotional activation experienced during a traumatic event may increase the likelihood of information being perceived and stored in the individual's autobiographic or episodic long-term memory with more clarity, coherence and

persistence compared to memories for neutral events (Magnussen, 2017). In healthy individuals, memories of traumatic events are likely to be remembered due to the significance of the event, they are often rehearsed or repeated, and have consequences for the individual (Brewin, 2011).

On the other hand, studies has shown a tendency for involuntary memory (e.g., intrusive memories, flashbacks) to be enhanced in clinical populations, while voluntary memory of the traumatic event tends to be effortful, incomplete (e.g. lacking in specific detail), fragmented, and disorganized (Brewin, 2007, 2014). That said, recent research has indicated that this is not necessarily the case, and, that trauma memories are coherent and not uniquely fragmented (Engelhard, McNally, & van Schie, 2019). Even though it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion concerning trauma narratives (O'Kearney & Perrott, 2006), it is important that police interviewers are aware of the different ways memories can be influenced and expressed. For instance, that trauma narratives are often dominated by emotional and sensorial details (Crespo & Fernandez-Lansac, 2016). Moreover, for individuals who develop PTSD, posttraumatic reactions often include experiences of anxiety that in turn may influence cognitive functioning, such as attention and working memory (Derakshan & Eysenck, 2009), limiting the interviewees' ability to do a thorough search of their memory of what happened (Kieckhaefer, Vallano, & Compo, 2014). It is important to be aware of these effects on memory as one might perceive accounts that are lacking in detail or contain discrepancies or gaps as less credible, reliable or trustworthy, even though this is always not the case (Ellison & Munro, 2016).

Interviewing traumatized interviewees

Investigative interviewing of traumatized victims should aim to 1) obtain as much information as possible about what happened, 2) reduce potential contamination of memory, and, 3) minimize the potential harm or distress experienced by the interviewee. To reach these goals, it requires the police interviewer to be open and flexible and tailor his/her approach to each individual interview as there will always be variation in personality, psychological needs, what victims have lived through, what reactions they may experience, and how they cope with their trauma. Additionally, the approach of the police interviewer must be adapted to the strategy and aims of the interview in each particular case (Smith & Milne, 2018). On a general note, however, the police interviewer should be non-coercive and nonjudgmental while aiming to create an informal and relaxed interview context. He/she should put effort into being flexible and accommodating to the interpersonal dynamics of the interview process. This includes the interviewer adapting his/her communication to the state of the interviewee, showing acceptance of emotions that occur (rather than avoiding, rejecting, or ignoring), and responding appropriately with regard to the psychological needs that arise in the interview relationship (Risan, Binder, & Milne, 2016b). The aim of approaching the interviewee should always be twofold: to accommodate the interviewee's state and facilitate safety to make him/her feel comfortable, and to create a relational context that increases the likelihood of a communicative flow, that is, to build rapport. In the following, issues considered important in preparing for the interview will be presented before suggestions for how interviewers should work to establish rapport, facilitate free narration and ask questions, manage emotional reactions to maintain rapport, and close the interview will be described.

Preparations for interviewing

Planning and preparing for an investigative interview concerns the mental process of getting ready and considering what needs to be done before the interview and cannot be underestimated. The success of an interview depends on it (Milne & Bull, 1999; Smith & Milne, 2011). Planning the interview should involve some consideration of information regarding the interviewee, the alleged offence, and, other information important to the investigation (Milne & Bull, 1999; Ministry of Justice, 2011). The interviewer should prepare by developing 1) a strategy for the interview emphasizing *what* needs to be covered (e.g. topics, sequence), and, 2) a plan for the interview describing *how* the strategy will be dealt with (e.g. communication techniques). Being well prepared make it easier for the interviewer to focus on his/her tasks during the interview and may contribute to the interviewee's perception of the interviewer as a professional and that he/she is being met with respect (Langballe & Schultz, 2017). After a structure and a strategy for the interview has been developed, the interviewer must consider how the aims of the interview can be achieved. This usually involves using knowledge about the victim (e.g. age, gender, first language, culture, religion, domestic circumstances, use of medication, relationship to alleged offender, etc) and the investigation to prepare for the process (Smith & Milne, 2011).

Prior to interviewing individuals who have experienced a (potentially) traumatic incident, the interviewer should consider if it is constructive to talk with, and prepare, the interviewee beforehand. For instance, if legislation allows and it is considered to be beneficial, it might be useful to have a telephone conversation as an alternative to summoning by mail. In a study based on interviews of police officers who interviewed victims after the Utøya massacre 2011, many of the interviewers expressed that they preferred to have the first contact with the interviewee per phone (Risan, Binder, & Milne, 2017). During this conversation, the interviewer could, for example, ask the interviewee how he/she is doing or if

there are any queries about the interview. They could also decide on a mutually convenient time for the interview. Substantive issues directly connected to the alleged offense should not be discussed at this stage. The telephone call may help the interviewer to get an impression of the interviewee, and may also be regarded by the interviewee as thoughtful and a way of clarifying ambiguities. This may consist of explaining the purpose of the interview, the general structure of the interview, the location, and who will be present. Such an initial contact may contribute to prepare the interviewee and enhance a sense of predictability. It also has the potential of reducing social tension and help to get the communication process running, laying the groundwork for further rapport development.

In some cases it might be relevant to conduct a practice interview to prepare the interviewee for the ground rules and how the interview will be conducted (e.g. conversational demands, expectations) (Brubacher, Roberts, & Powell, 2011; Danby, Brubacher, Sharman, & Powell, 2015). This can be relevant, for example, if the interviewee experiences strong reluctance, insecurity or anxiety concerning the interview. The aims of such an interview should be to address any concerns, make him/her comfortable with the situation, and motivate him/her for the interview. Here, the interviewee could be asked to recall a personal event unrelated to the issue of concern (to reduce the potential of contamination of memory) to prepare him/her for how questions will be asked and the requested level of detail (Ministry of Justice, 2011). This may increase the interviewees' sense of familiarity and experience of predictability concerning the coming interview. Another aspect of conducting such an interview is that it provides an opportunity to obtain an impression of, or to assess, the interviewee's state. This should shed light on questions such as; is the interviewee sufficiently comfortable to communicate in this context, or, can the state of the interviewee interfere with his/her ability to communicate? If there is any suspicion of vulnerability, the interviewer could ask the interviewee if he/she has any difficulties that we should be aware of (ACPO,

2010). Recognizing and obtaining an understanding of the interviewee's state is particularly important when working with traumatized persons, as the individual's internal experience is likely to have an impact on his/her narrative.

Furthermore, the interviewer should reflect upon the context of the investigation. For instance, is the interviewee intimidated or may he/she experience a fear of retaliation? Or, if the interview is related to a sexual offence, the interviewer must be prepared to hear details that could be highly personal. Could the interviewee be fearful of the police? How might the traumatic incident have influenced the interviewee in this particular case? How long ago did it happen? How will he/she react to my questions? How should I accommodate the experience of the interviewee if he/she becomes overwhelmed by anxiety, anger, or sadness? Reflections on how the interview may play out and how the potential psychological needs of the interviewee can be accommodated should guide the development of a plan for the interview which can serve as an outline for the interview structure and content. This should act as a bridge between background knowledge and the interview process, and may help to reduce the interviewer's stress level in the coming interview (Risan et al., 2017; Smith & Milne, 2011).

Building rapport

The first point of contact between interviewer and interviewee will often determine how well the interview proceeds (Milne, 2017), highlighting the significance of obtaining good rapport for the generation of an account. The importance of developing and maintaining rapport to reach investigative aims is often acknowledged in evidence-based protocols in different countries, such as PEACE, the British police training package in investigative interviewing (Milne & Bull, 1999; Milne, Shaw, & Bull, 2007). When establishing rapport, the aim is to explain to the interviewee the purpose of the interview and build a working relationship that

contributes to the interviewee providing information (Milne & Bull, 1999). Even though there has been a variation in how rapport is defined with regard to investigative interviewing (Bull & Baker, 2019), the theoretical framework of Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) is often referred to in the forensic literature. They describe the nature of rapport as consisting of three essential, interrelating components: mutual attentiveness (shared interest and degree of involvement in the interaction), positivity (feelings of mutual friendliness), and coordination (the balance, harmony or smoothness of the interaction). Rapport in investigative interviewing concerns the social influence of the interviewer; how he/she approaches the interviewee to make the individual feel comfortable, maximize his or her cognitive resources (e.g., access to memories), and provide a constructive account. Rapport is a dynamic state that can change over the course of an interaction and it is important to maintain through all phases of the interview (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Ord, Shaw, & Green, 2011; Risan et al., 2017; Vanderhallen & Vervaeke, 2014; Walsh & Bull, 2012). Building good rapport should be considered particularly important when interviewing traumatized interviewees because, for instance, the individual may experience a strong need for a safe relational context to be able to communicate well, or, the interview may touch upon topics that are highly personal or affect laden.

At the outset at the first point of contact, to develop rapport, the interviewer should aim to engage the interviewee and establish a trusting, goal-oriented relationship and an optimal context for the generation of his/her account. This entails building a relationship that enhances the interviewees' ability to communicate, withstands potential interpersonal tensions (e.g., communicative misunderstandings, frustration, resistance), and can act as a safe background for accommodating emotional states if they should occur. When meeting the interviewee, the investigator should greet him/her in a respectful manner and show a genuine interest in him/her, as well as endeavor to give a good first impression (e.g., being

professional and friendly). The interview room should be neutral, with no distracting elements. The interviewer should personalize the interview (e.g., introduce him-/herself by name, address the interviewee by first name, treat the interviewee as an individual with a unique set of needs) and aim to develop a relationship where the interviewee can experience a sense of equality, trust, and predictability (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Milne, 2017). To make the interviewee socially comfortable, it might be useful to engage in small talk (e.g. ask neutral questions which can be answered positively). The interviewer should use open-ended questions and encourage the interviewee to speak without interruption to prepare him/her for the style or format of the interview.

The interviewee should be given an explanation of the reason for and purpose of the interview, as well as the respective roles, rights, and regulations (Bjerknes & Fahsing, 2018). It is important to determine whether the interviewee has understood what he/she has been told and whether he/she has any queries or concerns about the interview. Preconceptions about contextual issues may occupy the interviewee's mind and should therefore be clarified. The interviewer should preview and describe the phases of the interview and the ways in which questions will be asked. Previewing the interview can be regarded as a way of encouraging active participation and strengthening the interviewee's experience of control. Verbal orientation provides an opportunity to reduce feelings of uncertainty, anxiety, and unpredictability, making the interviewee more comfortable (Fisher & Geiselman, 2010; Risan et al., 2017). The interviewee should be informed that there might be long periods of silence in the interview and, if this should happen, it is not a problem and it may help the interviewee to think further about the incident. The interviewer should also express that it is acceptable if the interviewee has trouble remembering or does not understand what he/she is being asked (Bull, 2010), and that they are welcome to ask questions at any time. The interviewer should encourage the interviewee to use various means of communication when appropriate (e.g.,

enact movements) (Shepherd, Mortimer, Turner, & Watson, 1999). The interviewee should be told that, if relevant, the interview may touch upon topics that are highly personal. At this point, the interviewer should communicate that he/she is open and receptive to whatever might occur during the interview. For instance, by emphasizing that the interviewee is in a safe place. It may also be beneficial to discuss how this will be managed, and whether the interviewee has any thoughts on the matter.

Facilitating free recall

When the interviewee seems sufficiently comfortable and rapport is established, the information gathering stage of the interview can begin. The free narrative mode is about encouraging the interviewee to spontaneously provide an account. The interviewee should be told that he/she is encouraged to concentrate and focus his/her attention, will not be interrupted, should use his/her own words, will be doing most of the talking, and, given time to reflect and answer one question at the time (Milne, 2017; Milne & Bull, 1999).

After the interviewee has been informed about the ground rules of the interview, it is time to facilitate a free narrative. This can be done in different ways, for instance, by saying: 'I would like you to tell me everything you can remember about the event, without editing or omitting anything. Describe it in as much detail as you can. You control the pace and you can start where it feels natural.' During the account, the interviewer can employ active listening (e.g., nonverbal behaviors such as posture, eye contact, mirroring) or prompts (e.g., by saying 'Mhm' or 'Can you tell me more about that?') to enhance communication.

The interviewee's free narrative gives the interviewer a basis for forming questions that can further clarify or expand the account. The interviewee should be informed that they will be asked some questions about what they have communicated, and that they are

encouraged to provide as many details as they can. They should also be informed about how questions will be structured (e.g. with regard to different topics, segments or episodes). This part calls for the interviewer to employ appropriate witness-compatible questioning (e.g. by using the interviewee's words, or, by sequencing the questions on the basis of the interviewee's account). It is important to be aware that memories can be disorganized, for example, by not being linear or coherent, and the interviewer should adjust his/her approach accordingly. Questions should be asked in an open and well-balanced manner (e.g. they should make sense to the interviewee), facilitate a coherent account and minimize the likelihood of misunderstandings. The semantic content of questions must be related to the type of information being sought by the investigative aims. This may require the interviewer to adjust his/her verbal approach. For example, by avoiding the use of complex sentences or legal terminology. The interviewer should aim to avoid questions that are lengthy, suggestive, or lead the narrative in a particular direction. This is especially important if the interviewee experiences that memories are fragmented and may be influenced by the perceived expectancies of the interviewer. In such instances, it is important to be aware of issues such as suggestibility, acquiescence, and compliance (O'Mahony, Milne, & Grant, 2012). When open questions have been asked, the interviewer should gradually present more specific questions to clarify the information already provided (Bjerknes & Fahsing, 2018).

Based on what the interviewee has presented in his/her free account, it may also be considered to facilitate the interviewee's narrative through a mental reinstatement of context, one of the main tools of the Cognitive Interview (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992, 2010; Fisher, Milne, & Bull, 2011; Milne, 2017; Milne et al., 2007). The context in which the incident was experienced and encoded can be regarded as a retrieval aid for memory, for instance, through internal cues (e.g. thoughts, feelings) or external contextual reminders (e.g. physical environment). The interviewer could ask the interviewee to reinstate cues or reminders

connected to specific mental images or memory segments before describing more details from memory. To reinstate context, the interviewer could say: ‘In your mind, go back to where the incident happened. Think of what you first observed... Think about who was there... What could you hear?... What did it smell like?... What did you feel?... What thoughts went through your mind?..’ During the account, it is important to remark that interviewees initially may be more comfortable talking about peripheral information pertaining to the event than the more central or specific details. It should also be noted that a mental reinstatement must be considered with caution, and should be based on an appraisal of the interviewee’s capacity to cope with distress so as not to run the risk of exacerbating his/her state (Risan et al., 2016b).

After the interviewee has provided a free recall and the interviewer has presented specific questions, it might be relevant to explore any discrepancies in the interviewees’ account. This can be considered a potentially difficult task, particularly if the interviewee is considered vulnerable. In such instances, the police interviewer should proceed with caution whilst questions should be carefully planned, phrased tactfully, and presented in a non-confrontational manner (Ministry of Justice, 2011).

Accommodating and managing emotions to maintain rapport

A police interview that concerns a traumatic event can trigger emotional reactions at any stage of the process. This may require that the interviewer is able to respond in an emotionally intelligent fashion, that is, using knowledge of emotions and the ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions to enhance thought and solve tasks (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008).

To accommodate emotional states, the police interviewer must first aim to understand the experience of the individual being interviewed. Accordingly, Fisher and Geiselman (1992,

2010) suggest that empathy, in addition to personalizing the interview, should be one of the guiding principles for developing rapport. Even though the concept of empathy has not been clearly defined in investigative interviewing (Oxburgh & Ost, 2011), research has shown its importance for building rapport (Dando et al., 2016; Holmberg, 2004; Madsen & Holmberg, 2015; Vanderhallen & Vervaeke, 2014). Empathy is about perceiving the experience of another person—his/her feelings, intentions, and needs—and to communicate and act on the basis of such an understanding (Binder, 2014; Rogers, 1961). For instance, through showing understanding for the victim's situation and well-being, or, expressing an interest in the interviewee as a person (Jakobsen, 2019). Bull and Baker (2019) describe different types of empathy on a continuum in the investigative interviewing context. On the one end there is rational/cognitive empathy (e.g. displaying an intellectual understanding for the interviewee's situation), whilst affective empathy (e.g. experiencing the state of the interviewee) is toward the other end. The authors argue that 'investigative empathy' should lie somewhere in the middle of this empathy continuum.

On a fundamental level, empathy entails a focused attention to, and being able to take in, the other's state. This necessitates the interviewer to be open, present and receptive, focusing not only on words but also on the nonverbal signals or patterns expressed from moment to moment (Siegel, 2010). In the process, the interviewer should aim to understand how the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of the interviewee are connected to his/her expressions and use this understanding to navigate his/her approach. Although there are patterns of similarity in the ways people express emotions – they tend to tighten their lips when they are angry and scowl when they feel sadness – there are also important differences. No emotion has one single obligatory expression. As neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barret has pointed out, emotional expressions are also to a certain degree learned. There are important differences, both between individuals and between cultural groups, in the way that emotions

are organized, both on an experiential and neurological level. It is therefore important that the interviewer keep an open and curious attitude, and not always take immediate impressions for granted, especially not when the interviewee is from a different sociocultural background (Barrett, 2017). Regarding trauma, the various ways in which the individual's state may be affected highlights the importance of the police interviewer having an understanding of emotional processes to be able to facilitate communication. For instance, if the interviewee verbally attacks the interviewer, it may be because of internal processes (e.g., anxiety, intrusive thoughts) and not necessarily a response to something the interviewer has said or done, and the interviewer should respond accordingly.

Managing emotions does not imply that the interviewer should aim to avoid or reduce all emotional arousal. Emotional states may assist the memory process and help the interviewee remember details of what happened. After all, emotions are connected to perception, memory, motivation, bodily sensations, and behavior (Lane, Ryan, Nadel, & Greenberg, 2015). On the other hand, individuals have a limited cognitive processing capacity which may be affected by strong, and sometimes maladaptive, emotional reactions, resulting in the person having difficulties doing a thorough search of memory and communicating. For instance, overwhelming sadness may cause the interviewee to be restrained, while strong tensions due to frustration, anger, or high levels of anxiety can make it difficult to concentrate. Such a situation calls for the interviewer to help the interviewee to cope with emotional states.

Emotion-focused coping aims at managing and controlling the emotional impact of the event and limiting the individual's level of distress (Green et al., 2010), for example, by building the capacity to handle distress, or through regulating emotional states. Emotion regulation concerns how the individual can increase, maintain, or decrease one or more experiential or behavioral components of emotion. The notion is that the experience of an

emotion induces the tendency for a person to react in a given way, and this tendency can be influenced (Gross, 1998; Risan, Binder, & Milne, 2016a). It should also be noted that research has shown how hyperarousal and emotion regulation are highly influential factors for the state of traumatized individuals (Boals, Riggs, & Kraha, 2013; Seligowski, Lee, Bardeen, & Orcutt, 2015). Correspondingly, traces of regulating interviewees' negative emotions can also be found in practice guidelines for investigative interviewing highlighting the importance of reducing the interviewees' anxiety or heightened arousal to enhance the memory process and ability to communicate (Fisher, 1995; Fisher & Geiselman, 1992). An important question, though, is how can this be done?

The first step towards accommodating emotions is to become aware of what the interviewee is experiencing in the present moment. The interviewer should be particularly observant of the interviewee's behavior and nonverbal communication, as emotional experiences are not always followed by explicit cognitive representations (Risan et al., 2016b; Safran & Greenberg, 1982). This includes awareness of the interviewee's tone of voice, facial expressions, posture, and body movements. Does the interviewee look and sound comfortable or uncomfortable? Does he/she seem grounded and present in the here and now? How does he/she look at me? Is he/she tense? What feelings are beneath the tone of the interviewee's vocal expression? When feelings arise in the interview process, it is important to highlight that not all emotional states will require much effort to be regulated or make the interviewee feel sufficiently comfortable enough to continue with the account. Quite often, it will be sufficient that the interviewer shows acceptance and affirms the experience of the interviewee, for instance, by acknowledging the victim's pain, showing empathy, or being supportive (e.g. Dando et al., 2016; Jakobsen et al., 2017). The interviewer should acknowledge and show understanding of the interviewee's state (e.g., 'I can see it is not easy to talk about this. Just take your time.'), as affirmative experiences can help regulate anxiety (Greenberg & Pascual-

Leone, 2006). The interviewer should aim to reduce the experienced distress and thereby enhance an atmosphere of safety by showing that he/she can cope with the emotions experienced by the interviewee (e.g., 'It is okay, you are in a safe place now. We can deal with this together. That was then, and this is now.'). The process corresponds with *containment* (Bion, 1962), which involves one person receiving and showing acceptance of the emotional communication of another in ways that make the experience of difficult feelings more tolerable in the interview relationship. The principle is that a safe relational context can help the interviewee experience difficult emotions without being overwhelmed by turmoil or distress in the process, allowing them to experience painful emotions as less dangerous (Binder & Hjeltnes, 2013). If the interviewee perceives that the interviewer understands and can cope with his/her feelings, it may create a safe atmosphere that expands the interviewee's capability to experience distress (Risan et al., 2017).

Moreover, the interviewer should continuously aim to assess the interviewee's *capacity* to cope with emotional reactions. The emphasis should be on assessing how much emotional activation the interviewee can handle while still providing a coherent account. Should the interviewer notice that the interviewee is experiencing anxiety, distress, or painful emotions that impair communication, he/she must engage in approaches that regulate the emotional experience. An important aspect of this process is to assess and be guided by the interviewee's psychological needs. For instance:

- fear or anxiety may be connected to a wish to avoid eye contact and a need to experience safety
- anger, frustration, or agitation may be connected to a need to self-assert, ventilate and experience understanding for boundary violations

- sadness and grief may be connected to a need to express painful feelings and experience compassion and support
- shame or guilt may be connected to a need to feel relief and experience acknowledgment and comfort (Greenberg, 2007)

To a large extent, regulating distress depends on an appraisal of the interviewee's psychological needs and the interviewer's ability to steer the interview process towards safety when feelings become difficult to handle. This can be done in different ways depending on how the interpersonal dynamics of the interview unfold: through attentional deployment (e.g., guiding attention to affect emotions), cognitive reappraisal (e.g., reframing the event), and response modulation strategies (e.g., modifying emotions by influencing physical experiences or reducing or enhancing their expression) (Thory, 2013; Zaki & Williams, 2013). To actively regulate emotional arousal, the interviewer can engage in approaches directed towards decreasing or controlling the interviewees' arousal. For instance, by temporarily taking a step back from painful thoughts or emotions. To do this, the interviewer can:

- ask the interviewee to take 3-4 slow deep breaths and focus on the movement of his/her breathing before continuing the account (to move attention to something the interviewee can control)
- if relevant, encourage the interviewee to draw a sketch (Milne, 2017; Shepherd et al., 1999) (to give the interviewee the option of moving his/her attention from inwards to outwards)
- take a break, temporarily change the topic of conversation, or ask the interviewee to slow down (to show the interviewee that he/she is in control of the interview process and to provide him/her with different options for modulating his/her inner experience) (Risan et al., 2016b)

On the other hand, if the interviewee is perceived as reluctant or withdrawing from the interview relationship, this may be a sign that the interviewer is dissociating or ‘spacing out’. If this should happen, the interviewer can engage in approaches aiming to ‘ground’ the interviewee by directing attention to the here and now (e.g., by obtaining eye contact and saying the interviewee’s name, asking about objects in the room, or, offering a glass of water) (Holbæk, 2014). Other, and similar, situations may call for the interviewer to help the interviewee increase arousal or motivate him/her to continue with the account. If this should happen, the interviewer can:

- ask the interviewee how he/she was feeling at the time (cf. context reinstatement)
- normalize the interviewee’s reaction to disarm the experience of symptoms (e.g. by showing understanding for the interviewees’ reaction and express acceptance and that this is not unusual)
- reframe aspects of the interviewees’ account. For instance, by showing appreciation or providing positive feedback on the interviewees’ efforts or emphasizing the importance of the interviewee’s contribution to the investigation to strengthen motivation go back to what was discussed in the rapport phase and bringing the interviewee’s state back to a point where he/she felt comfortable (Risan et al., 2016b).

When the interviewee appears to be in a position where he/she can continue with the account, the interviewer should aim to keep the communication flow going. For example, by saying ‘What happened next?’, ‘What else happened?’, or ‘Tell me more about that?’ to show acceptance and further motivate the interviewee to proceed.

Closing the interview

In the closure phase of the interview, the interviewer should check if he/she has sufficiently obtained the case-specific information that was sought after. When closing, the interviewer should aim to reinforce a positive atmosphere and a working relationship. This can include a return to talking about neutral topics as in the initial rapport-phase, showing appreciation for the interviewee's cooperation and contribution, or, orientating the interviewee about what will happen next (Bjerknes & Fahsing, 2018; Shepherd & Griffiths, 2013). The interviewee should also be provided with contact details of the investigator in case he/she later should have additional information or questions about the investigative process. Another aim of this phase is to provide the interviewee with a good last impression of the police, as it is possible that the interviewee may have to attend additional investigative interviews in the future. This includes making sure that the interviewee feels that he/she has been attended to and that he/she is comfortable before leaving. The interviewer should ask if the interviewee has any questions and if he/she needs any further assistance (e.g., they may have questions about the legal process or need follow-up by health personnel).

Conclusion

Interviewing traumatized interviewees can pose quite a challenge for police interviewers. In these interviews, it is important that investigators are conscious of how the interpersonal processes of the investigative interview influence and have consequences for both the quantity and quality of information obtained as well as the state of the interviewee. A constructive interview holds the potential of both eliciting an optimal account as well as having positive effects on the well-being of the interviewee, for instance, if the interviewee can experience a sense of empowerment or new ways of coping with painful emotions connected to what

he/she has lived through. This does require, however, that the interviewer have an understanding of the impact of trauma and tailors each interview accordingly.

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